



HELPING YOUR CHILD GET ORGANIZED FOR SCHOOL

Tips from the Expert, Christopher M. Bogart, Ph.D.

Three Main Assumptions:

- 1) Most children will only be organized if their environment is organized.
- 2) Most children need to be taught specific ways to become organized
- 3) The concept of *time* is very difficult for children; therefore, this concept needs to be taught and reinforced frequently.

The Top Ten Strategies To Organize Your Child

Teach your child to use checklists. Help make "to-do" lists a habit. Checklists are used for assignments, household chores, and to remind your child to bring appropriate materials to school. Crossing completed items off a list provides reinforcement and a sense of accomplishment.

Set a designated study space. Children should study in the same place every night where supplies and materials are close at hand. This should be a relatively quiet place without people walking in and out. Young children may want their study space near a parent; this should be encouraged, as parents can have the opportunity to monitor progress and encourage good study habits.

Set a designated study time. The same specific time should be reserved for doing homework every day. The best time is usually not right after school. Children benefit from some time to unwind. Involve the child in this decision; base it on each child's style of focus. Even if there is no homework, the reserved time should be used to review the day's lessons, read for fun, or organize the backpack or files.

Organize homework assignments. Before beginning a homework period, help your child prioritize assignments. Start with one that's not too long or difficult, but do not save the hardest for last.

Keep organized notebooks. Help keep track of papers by organizing them in a binder/folder for each class. This helps organize notes and material for quizzes and tests. Use color-coded dividers to separate class notes and have separate sections in the binder for things "to be done" and "items completed."

Conduct a backpack clean-up once weekly. Children should go through their backpacks, folders, notebooks each week. They should clear out unnecessary papers, add new supplies, and place papers in order. Papers not immediately needed should be put in a color-coded file system at home near the work space.

Create a household schedule. Establish/adhere to a regular dinner time, bedtime, and wake-up time. Try a 30-minute "family *quiet* time" where everyone plays, reads or rests in their own rooms. Predictable schedules reduce disorganization. Try to limit television and computer time to specific short periods.

Keep a Master Calendar. Keep a wall-sized calendar for all family commitments, extracurricular activities, days off from school and major events. Note exam and due dates for projects. This way everyone keeps track of each other's activities and reduces scheduling conflicts.

Prepare for the day ahead. Before bedtime, your child should pack the backpack, clothes should be laid out, and lunches prepared. This cuts down morning confusion and allows for a relaxed morning.

Provide necessary support while your child is learning to become more organized. Help your child set up lists and learn a standard approach to homework. Most importantly, be a good model. Stay organized!